

## [\*\*safe with me by orphan\\_account\*\*](#)

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Gen, also learning to ride bikes so, heavily veiled allusions to past abuse, it's a bit of a mixed bag lmao

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Eleven (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper

**Relationships:** Eleven & Jim "Chief" Hopper

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**Summary:**

a null result, otherwise called a negative result, is an experimental outcome which fails to show an expected effect or fulfill its object.

or, a reaffirmation.

(rated T for language.)

## safe with me

### Author's Note:

disclaimer: i am but a simple humanities major.  
everything i know about the scientific process is from  
high school or google.

from the following prompt on tumblr: el/hopper  
father/daughter bonding please, hopper teaches el to  
ride a bike? at first el is scared hopper will act like  
papa if she does something wrong and abuse her, he  
has to reassure her he wouldn't

title from re: stacks by bon iver

Hopper regrets telling her to hold on tight.

They're set up in the empty lot where the Buehler's Foods used to be, grass and budding flowers poking through the cracks of the cement. El's currently white-knuckling the handlebars of - God help him - a bike.

It's not much - the paint's a little peeled, and it's not as fancy as the ones those kids spend all their damn time on, but she'd begged and begged for one of her own. And, well, apparently he's not as immune to that puppy dog look as he thought.

For all her excitement, he thought this would be easy, that he'd send her off and spend most of the Saturday watching her zoom in circles around him. Serves him right for ever thinking that this - any of this - would be easy.

"Just stop braking every two seconds, and you'll be fine." He feels like a broken record at this point.

"I know," El says, a note of petulance in her voice. He knows this tune well. It sounds like far-off thunder: a storm on the horizon.

"Okay, well, then, don't slow down when you lose your balance. You've gotta keep the momentum going." Patience has never been his

strong suit, but God help him, he's trying here. "Let's go again."

She eyes him warily, but her slightly-too-big helmet bobs as she nods. (He'll be damned if he lets her crack her head open on his watch.) She uses her toes to scoot the bike along the asphalt, getting them into motion, waiting until they pick up some speed before lifting her feet to the pedals. And they're moving, and she's pedaling, and he's got one hand on her back, one hand next to hers on one of the bars to steer, and she's doing it, *finally* --

She stops.

"What?" Hopper's bewildered. "What happened?"

El shakes her head. "I can't." She sits there, feet on either side of the bike, her mouth turned down in the beginnings of a pout.

Hopper doesn't get it. He's seen her ride through town on the back of the Wheeler kid's bike at speeds that make his head spin, and he knows she's got her powers to keep herself safe if she falls. After all she's been through, all she's done, she's not afraid of a bike.

Her silence makes something unpleasant tighten in his chest, but he just sighs and tells her, "Okay, well, try it again. Keep your hands off the brakes this time."

"I got it," she snaps, rolling her eyes, but something sets in her jaw and she readies herself.

And it's the same thing all over again. El can do it, he knows she can, but the slightest wobble and she's slamming on the handbrakes again, pulling up short. She unclasps the helmet, flings it halfway across the lot with a cry of frustration, lets the bike clatter to the ground.

"Kid, come on! You had it!" He feels like he wants to rip his hair out, but patience, he tells himself, patience. They've gotten so much better lately, the two of them.

But El's got no doors to slam, nothing else to throw, so she turns her anger inward, sitting down on the cracked pavement, curling up with her head on her knees.

Hopper throws up his hands and looks around in bewilderment, as if some force will magically intervene and fix everything. But she's stuck with him. He'll be damned if he lets her down.

"Hey." He gets down on a knee, puts them on eye level. Except she still won't look up. "You were doing so good. What's going on?"

He doesn't expect her to respond. He knows how words escape her when she gets upset, but he figures it's good to ask anyway, to let her know that he's still there to hear the answers.

There's a few moments of quiet. A bird chirps, somewhere. Then he hears her murmur something into her knees.

"What was that?"

She raises her red-rimmed eyes. "Null result," she mumbles, and puts her head back down again.

Hopper never was great in science, but he knows lab speak when he hears it.

He wants to fucking kill those sons of bitches. How dare they treat this living, breathing girl like a fucking lab rat, enduring God knows what just so they can get a fucking result.

But that rage isn't helpful, not now, so he rubs a hand over his face, exhales heavily, tries to get it under control.

"Listen, El. I don't - I'm not gonna get mad at you if you can't get it right. It's okay if you fu- mess it up. If you can't do it. It's okay." He wishes he was better with words, but he's got to push through for her. "You've just - you've gotta let yourself try." Hopper pauses for a breath, wondering if he should even mention that son of a bitch, but his presence hangs thick in the air, and he feels like he needs to banish it, somehow. "I'm not like him. I won't be mad. Promise."

He kneels there until his feet start to lose feeling. Tentatively, he reaches out, rubs a gentle hand over her back like he does when she wakes up screaming. El chokes out a sob and sits up, meeting his eyes, and he sees something like recognition there before she scoots over and wraps him in a hug.

And, God, his fucking heart just melts. Here, she can hold on as tightly as she goddamn pleases.

“I’m sorry.” He doesn’t know what he’s apologizing for. All of it, he guesses.

Hopper doesn’t know how long they stay there, just sitting on there on the ground, as El steadies her breath. He’s not going to rush her.

After a bit, she disentangles herself, wipes the snot from her nose with her sleeve, and stands up. She offers him a hand, and he takes it, biting down a laugh as she tugs him to his feet.

“We can be done for today,” he offers, but she’s already walking towards the bike, putting a hand out and letting the helmet fly back into her hand. He helps her fasten the strap before helping her onto the seat, giving her one more look as he asks, “You sure?”

“I’m sure,” she responds, her voice clear.

God, he’s so proud of her.

She pushes off, and he’s still holding her steady as she begins to pedal, moving them faster. This time, when she begins to lose her balance, she pushes through it, picks up the momentum, and steadies herself. He feels himself grin.

They move a few more yards before she wobbles again, but this time he guides her through it, keeps her upright as she tries to steady herself but loses control and comes close to falling. But he’s got her, and he catches her and the bike and she’s fine, just fine. More than fine, actually, if her exhilarated little laugh is anything to go by.

Hopper can’t resist it - once her feet are on solid ground, he lets go and throws his hands into the air and cheers, “YES! That’s what I’m talking about!”

El’s laughter grows, her cheeks flushing in pride and what he thinks is a little embarrassment.

“Again,” she tells him.

They stay out there until the shadows grow long, and by the end of it, he's even guided her through a few turns, his only support a single hand on her back. She comes close to falling more than a few times, but there's no hesitation in her sure movements.

Plus, he's always there to catch her.

**Author's Note:**

s/o to my muses aka that one interview where millie describes el as “stroppy” and david harbour’s twitter

still taking prompts via tumblr @sansasummers if you want!